Canadian Heritage Patrimoine canadien

Canada

News Release ~ Communiqué

Plaque unveiled in honor of Calixa Lavallée

QUÉBEC CITY, July 1, 1995 - Mr. Martin Cauchon, MP for Outremont, on behalf of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Honourable Michel Dupuy, today unveiled a commemorative plaque of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, in recognition of the significant historic role of Calixa Lavallée. The unveiling, part of the celebration of Canada Day, took place in the ballroom of the Château Frontenac, on the occasion of a swearing-in ceremony for 350 new Canadian citizens.

A composer and a music teacher, Calixa Lavallée was proficient on several musical instruments, such as the piano, the violin, the organ and the trumpet. It was at the request of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society of Québec City that he composed the music for "O Canada!", on lyrics by judge Adolphe-Basile Routhier. The anthem was performed for the first time on the evening of June 24, 1880, on the occasion of the National Convention of French Canadians held in Québec City. Translated into English in 1901, "O Canada!" was officially proclaimed Canada's national anthem on July 1, 1980.

Born in 1842 on Rang Beauce, near Verchères, Calixa Lavallée emigrated to the United States at the age of 15. In 1861, he enlisted in the army and became first trumpeter for a military band. As such, he took part in the Civil War. After a brief return to Canada, he took up residence in New York City where, around 1870, he was appointed musical director of the Grand Opera House, which later became the famed Metropolitain Opera. In the following years, he came back to Canada on several occasions, before settling permanently in the United States, where he passed away in 1891, at the age of 48.

Well known in the world of music, Calixa Lavallée, even while residing abroad for extended periods, was able to contribute to the blossoming of music in Canada. The ease and natural simplicity of expression which characterize his works, resulted in his recognition as an internationally respected composer.

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada advises the Minister of Canadian Heritage with regard to the commemoration of persons, sites and events which have an important place in Canada's national history.

Information :

Michel de Courval
Canadian Heritage
Parks Canada
1-800-463-6769
(418) 648-7097

Neil Wilson
Press Secretary
Minister's Office
(819) 997-7788